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GROWTH OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES AND METHODS IN NEW YORK PROVINCE

1765-1774

IT has been seen that the new methods in nomination in New York province found their origin in the growth of the democratic spirit during the middle and last half of the eighteenth century.¹ The tendency of the coming consciousness of equality was to cut into the old factions based on personal influence, and to reorganize parties on a basis of principle. The Revolution gave this movement a great impetus by hastening—to some extent by completing—this change, and by teaching a minority the necessity of organization and the uses of political machinery; the Revolution was the culmination in theory, and in fact to a considerable extent, at least in New York, of the effort of the masses to pull down authority from the top and place it upon the ground. In theory and in practice the masses, for the time being, got vital control of the business of governing. The lessons of the Revolution in this respect were incalculable, and no consideration of the nominating convention can be complete or intelligible without taking them into account. It will be necessary therefore to indicate the development of the Revolutionary parties in New York, to follow the changes from the old personal factions through the early inchoate divisions of the Stamp Act and Tea Act period, to the later well defined separation into radicals and conservatives. It is the design of this paper: (1) to trace the origin of these two factions up to the time when they began the contest for directing and shaping the Revolutionary movement in New York; (2) to indicate incidentally the development of the popular extra-legal organization through which this directing and shaping influence was later exercised, largely through the nomination of candidates to the most important Revolutionary offices within the gift of the people.

In reality the anti-British struggle of the early Revolutionary period was a continuation of the anti-British struggle which had been going on since the administration of Governor Cosby in 1732. Until that time the administration of colonial New York, from the

¹ See article entitled, "Nominations in Colonial New York," *AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*, January, 1901.

point of view of British control, had been comparatively mild and indifferent. Party conflicts within the province had been largely personal. In so far as they were religious or political, they were an imitation, to a very considerable extent, of similar conflicts in the mother country. The bitter Leisler factions which disturbed New York for more than a quarter of a century were the outgrowth in the province of the English Revolution of 1688; and in this struggle political, religious and personal motives were inextricably mixed. Occasionally a governor like Bellomont made himself disliked, or one like Cornbury made himself despised. It is true also that even from the first there were two questions which served to divide the governor and council as the representatives of the British government, from the assembly as the representative of the colony; these were the question of enforcing the laws of trade and the question of controlling the colonial revenue. Bellomont indeed aroused disfavor by trying to enforce the former, while Cornbury and Hunter met a stubborn resistance in their efforts to reduce the power of the assembly over the appropriation of money and the control of the governor's salary. But the laws of trade were not an irritating question after Bellomont's time, and the matter of the revenue was compromised in 1715, during the administration of Governor Hunter. It was not, therefore, until the time of Cosby and Clarke and Clinton, that the anti-British party began to crystallize around the assembly, and the pro-British party around the governor. It was at this time that the growing democratic spirit, the coming consciousness of equality, a certain feeling of political self-sufficiency, resulted in a more jealous watchfulness of every claim put forth by the governor, and in an increasing tendency to look upon the governor as the agent of a power more or less foreign, if not actually hostile, to the colony's interests.

During the years from 1732 to 1760, the principal questions which were dividing parties into British and anti-British were the freedom of the press, the freedom of the judiciary from British control, the binding force of royal instructions and executive decrees, the frequency of elections, the appointment of colonial agents to England, and the control by the assembly of the revenue and, through the revenue, of the administration of the laws.

The question of the control of the revenue by the assembly had, as we have seen, come up before. All through the administration of Fletcher and during that of Cornbury and of Hunter, the assembly had carefully guarded what it considered its rights in this respect; it refused to grant revenue at the request or the demand of the governor; it refused to grant a life salary to the governor; it refused

to allow the council to amend money bills ; it insisted upon an elective treasurer. In this early struggle the assembly showed even the tendency, so manifest later, to interfere in the administration of the laws by specifying more or less minutely the purposes for which, and the methods and agents by which, the money was to be expended. But in the later period the quarrel was renewed and intensified ; its full bitterness was not experienced until the period of the Indian wars of Governor Clinton's administration. During these years the policy of the assembly was clearly defined ; it would not only control the levying of taxes, but it would also control appropriations and expenditures. By specifying minutely the methods and agents by which the money that it appropriated was to be expended, independent or discretionary power in the administration and execution of the laws was materially weakened if not destroyed. The persistent policy of limiting appropriations to one year made frequent sessions of the assembly a practical necessity,¹ while the struggle for frequent elections, which lasted some years, finally culminated in the Septennial Act of 1743.² The virtual helplessness of the governor led to a bill in Parliament proposing to give the force of law to royal instructions. It was to resist the passage of this bill that the assembly appointed two agents to England, and raised five hundred pounds for their expenses ;³ at a later time the assembly took the matter of the agency into its own hands through the appointment of an agent by resolution without consulting the governor, providing for his salary by a rider to the salary of the governor himself.⁴ The freedom of the press was vindicated in the famous and somewhat dramatic trial of Zenger, the effect of which, in fostering the spirit of resistance to what was considered oppression, can hardly be overestimated.⁵ Finally, the question of the freedom of the judiciary from British control, or more directly from the governor's control, was at issue in the Cosby-Van Dam controversy ;⁶ it was a matter which the people watched with jealous care, and every attempt of the governors to interfere in any way with the judicial arrangements was resisted stubbornly.

¹ See the address of the assembly, September, 1737, wherein the assembly frankly assured the governor that no appropriations would be made for a longer period than one year. *Assembly Journal*, p. 706.

² *New York Colonial Documents*, VI. 136 ; Schoonmacher, *History of Kingston*, 118. The first act, passed December 16, 1737, provided for triennial assemblies with yearly sessions. *Laws of New York*, Chapter 650. Disallowed by the King November 30, 1738. *New York Colonial Documents*, VI. 136.

³ *Laws of New York*, Chapter 788.

⁴ See Tanner, "Colonial Agencies in England," *Political Science Quarterly*, XVI. 43.

⁵ Pasco, *Old New York*, II. 52 ; *Memorial History of New York*, II. 237 ; Lamb, *History of New York*, I. 557 ; Thomas, *History of Printing*, II. 100.

⁶ *Memorial History of New York*, II. 583.

Such were the questions which were forming the British and anti-British parties. At first these questions were viewed very largely from the old standpoint of personality. With the governor stood De Lancey and the powerful following which he controlled; with the assembly went the party of Livingston, supported by the able lawyers William Smith and John Morin Scott, and by very nearly if not quite all the rising young men of the day.¹ Increasingly this latter party shaped and guided the growing interest of the people in political questions. To counteract the mild influence of the court paper, Bradford's Gazette, Zenger's Journal was established; it became the mouthpiece of the anti-court party, and gave utterance to those views, wise or unwise, which it was thought would serve to win for that party the popular support. And not indeed without avail; the popular party gained steadily as it backed up the assembly in its resistance to the governor.² More or less steadily the purely personal element died out. Before 1750 De Lancey himself was at odds with the governor.³ The old court party became demoralized. In 1750 the so-called Whig club was formed, and for many years the popular party was distinctly in the lead. When the Stamp Act

¹ Van Dam was supported in the trial with Cosby by William Smith and James Alexander. Of the three judges, De Lancey and Philipse were for Cosby, but the chief justice, Lewis Morris, was for Van Dam. Morris very soon after lost his judgeship which went to De Lancey, but he then stood for Westchester county for the assembly, and won in a contest which excited more popular interest than perhaps any election ever held in New York province. From this time, and more especially after the Zenger trial, the De Lancey faction became more avowedly the court party, while its enemies espoused upon every occasion the popular side. *Memorial History of New York*, II. 217, 233, 583; Bolton, *History of Westchester County*, I. 136; Valentine, *History of New York*, p. 264; *New York Journal*, November 5, 1733.

² *Memorial History of New York*, II. 248, 249, 262; Broadside dated August 25, 1750, in the New York Historical Society Library, Vol. I. of the collection; *New York Colonial Documents*, VI. 247, 417, 578; Onderdonk, *Queens County in Olden Times*, pp. 21, 31, 33; Smith, *History of New York*, II. 37; Stone, *Life of William Johnson*, I. 39, 157; Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation*, 1865, p. 779; 1866, p. 703; *New York Weekly Post Boy*, June 24, 1745.

³ *Memorial History of New York*, II. 261, 296. "Nothing could have been so unhappy," writes Clinton to the Duke of New Castle, Feb. 13, 1748, "for this province and myself, as the unexpected promotion [of De Lancey to the Lt.-Governorship] which became known when the elections were coming on for a new Assembly. Wherein I had carried the choice of several members for the counties that were well attached to his Majesty's interest . . . and should have succeeded with several others, but that messengers were immediately dispatched throughout the province with the news of Mr. De Lancey's being made Lt.-Governor, which damped the inclinations of all my friends, as dreading the exorbitant power and resentment of this man." *New York Colonial Documents*, VI. 417. Again in 1750, Clinton laments that nothing has been done that he desired, for the encouragement of those that remained faithful. Otherwise, "I make no doubt but that every man of the Faction would have been left out of this election . . . and this notwithstanding that I am informed that Chief Justice De Lancey is gone into the country, since the writs issued, personally to influence the people in their election." *Ibid.*, 578.

was passed the popular party controlled the assembly and the province; the letters of Lt. Governor Colden reveal his helplessness.¹

The Stamp Act raised the first of a series of questions which were to complete the formation of the Revolutionary parties in New York province and state. The popular party of Livingston was then in control of the assembly. Of the four well marked classes into which New York society was divided, three of them—the land owners, the professional classes and the merchants—were closely united in interests through business and family relationships.² Opposition to the governor and council as the agent of the British government had come to be recognized as the cue in all political questions. When the Stamp Act came, the opposition which had been directed against the agents of the home government, was transferred to the home government itself. The conflict was felt to be more or less a continuation of the old one which had engaged the colony for so many years; it was merely a new act of oppression against which was directed the whole force of the popular party, which meant at first nearly the whole force of the colony.

The lead in the opposition was at first taken by the assembly. As early as October 18, 1764, the assembly had ordered that the committee which had been appointed to correspond with the assembly's agent in England, should also be a committee to correspond with other assemblies with reference to the late acts of Parliament on the "trade of the northern colonies."³ The next year when the

¹ See *Colden's Letter Book*, I. 187, 231, 362, 422, 468; II. 68, 86. (New York Historical Society Collections, Vols. IX. and X.)

² The following division into classes is taken from Lieutenant-Governor Colden's report on the state of the province in 1765. "The people of New York are properly distinguished into different ranks. (1) The proprietors of the large tracts of land who include within their claims from 100,000 acres to above one million of acres under one grant. Some of these remain in one single family. Others are by devises and purchases claimed in common by considerable numbers of persons. (2) The gentlemen of the law make the second class in which are properly included both bench and bar. Both of them act on the same principles, and are of the most distinguished rank in the policy of the province. (3) The merchants make the third class. Many of them have rose suddenly from the lowest rank . . . to considerable fortunes, and chiefly in illicit trade in the last war. They abhor every limitation of trade . . . and therefore gladly go into every measure whereby they hope to have trade free. (4) In the last rank may be placed the farmers and mechanics. Though the farmers hold their land in fee simple, they are, as to condition of life, in no way superior to the common farmers in England. This last rank includes the bulk of the people and in them consists the strength of the province . . . The gentlemen of the law are either owners, heirs, or strongly connected in interest with the proprietors." *Letter Book*, II. 68-70. Likewise the merchants were for the most part, "strongly connected with the owners of these great tracts by family interest." Colden to the Lords of Trade, September 20, 1764. *Ibid.*, I. 363.

³ *Assembly Journal*, II. 780. In his *History of Westchester County During the American Revolution*, Mr. Dawson points to this committee, with a certain note of triumph illustrative of a curious provincialism, as the first of the Revolutionary committee.

Stamp Act raised an opposition which carried away nearly all classes alike, the movement in New York was still directed by the assembly. It approved the plan of a congress of delegates to consider the matter and decide upon measures of resistance, which had been suggested by the assembly of Massachusetts, and it provided for the appointment of delegates to represent New York by referring the whole matter to the committee of correspondence that had already been named.¹ Thus until October 28, the day on which the congress adjourned, the opposition to the Stamp Act was distinctly in the hands of the leading men of the colony outside of the small remnant of the governor's party. As a movement it represented the property, professional and commercial interests of the province. But from this date the resistance takes on a more radical character; especially in the city of New York where the Revolutionary movement centered from first to last, it was more and more dominated by the lowest of the four classes—the unfranchised mechanics and artisans, the "inhabitants." As a result we find the propertied and commercial classes began soon to draw back and assume a more conservative attitude. The organization which represented the unfranchised class, and assumed the leadership in this more radical phase of the movement, was the so-called "Sons of Liberty."

The origin of the Sons of Liberty is somewhat in doubt. According to Governor Colden, whose statement has been followed by Dawson, the society was the outgrowth of an organization of the lawyers in 1750, whose object from the very first was political and revolutionary.² This is, however, probably far fetched. The papers

of correspondence. "Six years before Massachusetts appointed her faint hearted committee, whose fear of Great Britain prevented the preparation of even a single letter, and nearly nine years before that celebrated meeting at the Raleigh Tavern, Richmond, where Virginia gave birth to her first born, the Assembly of New York originated the movement and appointed a committee of correspondence with Robert R. Livingston at its head." p. 63. See also, p. 61 n. If it is a question of origin in mere form, one may equally well go back to the committee of safety of the Leisler régime, or to the committees of safety of the English civil war. See Leisler Narrative, *New York Colonial Documents*, III. 670.

¹ Colden's *Letter Book*, II. 35.

² "After Mr. Delancey had, by cajoling Mr. Clinton, received the commission of Chief Justice during good behavior, the profession of the law entered into an association, the effect of which your lordship had formerly opportunity of observing in some striking instances. They purposed nothing less to themselves than to obtain the direction of all the measures of the government, by making themselves absolutely necessary to every governor, in assisting him when he complied with their measures and by distressing him when he did otherwise." Colden to the Earl of Halifax, February 22, 1765. Colden's *Letter Book*, I. 469. Quoted in Dawson, *The Sons of Liberty in New York*, p. 40 n. "As early as the year 1754 there were men in America, I may say in the towns of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Williamsburg, who held independence in prospect." Examination of James Galloway, *New York Journal*, October 25, 1779. "The gentlemen of the law some years since entered into an association with intention, among other

of John Lamb, one of the moving spirits of the society of the Sons of Liberty, indicate little if any connection between the two organizations; from these papers it appears that the Sons of Liberty were formally organized shortly after the passage of the Stamp Act, as a secret society which did not assume an open and public character until some years later.¹ Neither is it strictly true, as Dawson maintains, that they directed the whole struggle. Livingston, Smith, and John Morin Scott, who were prominent in the early part of the Stamp Act trouble, do not appear to have been connected with the Sons of Liberty, in any active capacity even at the first, and certainly at a later time the leaders in the society were the more radical spirits, like Lamb, Sears, Wiley, Robinson, and the notorious Alexander McDougall. What is true is that the Sons of Liberty represented the lowest of the four classes, the artisan and laboring classes of the city, and that they directed the conflict in so far as popular agitation and mob violence formed a part of it.²

This mob violence and popular agitation, during the Stamp Act episode, reached a climax from the 1st to the 3d of November, as a result of the arrival of the stamps at Fort George. The mob went through the city crying "liberty," destroying property, and burning in effigy certain persons high in authority, including the governor

things, to assume the direction of the government upon them, by the influence they had in the Assembly, gained by their family connections and by the profession of the law, whereby they are invariably in the secrets of many families. Many court their friendship, all dread their hatred. By these means, though few of them be members, they rule the Assembly in all matters of importance." Colden's Report on the state of the province, December 6, 1765. *New York Colonial Documents*, VII. 796.

¹ "The association of the Sons of Liberty was organized soon after the passage of the stamp act, and extended throughout the colonies." Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, p. 2. See also, *Memorial History of New York*, II. 347, 374.

² The members of the committees, fairly expressive of leadership in the society it may be supposed, are given by Leake as follows: — *New York City*: John Lamb, Isaac Sears, William Wiley, Edward Laight, Thomas Robinson, Flores Bancker, Charles Nicoll, Joseph Allicoke, and Gershom Mott. *Albany*: Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, Myndertse Raseboom, Robert Henry, Thomas Young. *Huntington*: J. S. Hobart, Gilbert Palter, Thomas Brush, Cornelius Conklur, Nathaniel Williams. *Life and Times of General Lamb*, p. 4. See also, *House Journal*, January 7, 1848; and, Sears, *Pictorial History of the United States*.

The first popular meeting of importance was called by the merchants. On the 17th of October, 1765, the following notice appeared in the *New York Gazette*:—"A meeting of the friends of liberty and the English Constitution, in this city and parts adjacent, is earnestly desired by great numbers of the inhabitants, in order to form an association of all who are not already slaves, in opposition to all attempts to make them so." Soon after, October 31, a meeting was held, probably as a result of this notice, at George Burns's inn. Resolutions agreeing not to ship English goods until the Stamp Act was repealed were signed by some 200 merchants. *New York Gazette*, November 7, 1765. Leake states that the meeting also appointed a committee of correspondence, of five members, all Sons of Liberty. *Life and Times of General Lamb*, pp. 14, 15. The *Gazette* does not mention it. See also, *Memorial History of New York*, II. 367 n.

himself.¹ But opposition of this sort was not to the liking of the propertied classes, however much they may have disapproved of the levy and collection of the stamp tax. A little rioting was admirable it is true, so long as it remained entirely under their own control and was directed to the one end of bringing the English government to terms. But when the destruction of property began to be relished for its own sake by the classes which were propertyless, and when the cry of liberty came loudest from those who were most conspicuous for their lack of all political privileges, it seemed well to draw back; these men might not cease their shouting when purely British restrictions were at an end. The ruling class in New York saw clearly that "liberty" and "no taxation" were arguments which might be used with as great potency against themselves as against the home government—arguments which indeed the unfranchised classes were already making use of. Consequently on Monday, the 4th of November, the mayor and several leading citizens, among them Livingston, attended a council called by the governor. The governor promised not to deliver or suffer to be delivered any of the stamps in Fort George. This promise was affixed to a statement purporting to express the satisfaction of the "Freemen and Freeholders," and their further determination to keep the peace until other causes of conflict arose; the document was signed by Livingston, Cruger, Beverley, Robinson, and J. Stevens, printed on a broadside, and circulated throughout the city. But in spite of the fact that the proposition bore the names of Beverley and Robinson, the "people" were not satisfied. It was demanded that the stamps be delivered to the corporation, and a popular meeting was called for the 5th of November. The common council then took the initiative; a committee was sent to the governor, and the stamps, in return for a receipt, were taken and lodged in the city hall. The mob dispersed.²

This reaction of the propertied classes³ against the more rad-

¹ "31st October, 1765. Several people in mourning for the near issue of the stamps, and the interment of their liberty. Descended even to the Bag-Gammon boxes at the Merchants Coffee House being covered with black and the dice in crape. This night a mob in three squads went through the streets crying 'liberty,' at the same time breaking the lamps and threatening particulars that they would the next night pull down their houses." *The Montresor Journals* (New York Historical Society Collections for 1881), p. 336. For a further account of the doings of the mob, especially the burning of the governor in effigy, see *Colden's Letter Book*, II. 54; *Memorial History of New York*, II. 360; *Montresor*, p. 337.

² *Memorial History of New York*, II. 363. For the receipt which was given, see *Colden's Letter Book*, II. 57.

³ While the propertied class was seconded to some extent, in this reactionary movement, by the merchants and the lawyers, it is still true that the land owners were at this date the prime movers in the reaction. The main body of the merchants certainly assumed

ical methods of the Sons of Liberty, which was also a feeling of jealousy at the interference of the lower classes in politics, was attended with more success in the matter of instructing the city's representatives in the assembly. The leaders now made use of their experience in political methods to secure success by a little diplomacy, where, in point of mere numbers, they were very likely at a disadvantage. On the 25th of November, certain of the leaders of the radicals, after consultation, posted a notice about the city, according to their custom, calling a meeting of the freemen and freeholders for the purpose of considering the matter of issuing instructions to their representatives.¹ On the day appointed the conservative leaders, it appears, attended the meeting in considerable numbers, and by an ingenious device appointed their own committee, laid aside the originally prepared instructions, and adopted less radical ones in their stead.² The following day their committee in person presented the instructions to the assembly.³

a conservative attitude only at a later date; as for the lawyers, some ultimately became Tories others remained with the radical party. "The lawyers leveled at . . . to be at the bottom of this disgraceful insurrection." "The lawyers deemed by the people here to be hornets and firebrands . . . the planners and incendiaries of the present rupture." *The Montresor Journals*, p. 339.

¹"LIBERTY PROPERTY AND NO STAMPS! A general meeting of the freeholders, freemen, and inhabitants of the city and county of New York is desired on Tuesday afternoon, at the house of Mr. Burns . . . in order to agree upon some instructions to be given to their representatives in the general Assembly." *New York Mercury*, December 2, 1765. See also, *The Montresor Journals*, p. 340.

²When the meeting had assembled, "one or more of the company, supposed to be previously instructed, proposed some particular gentlemen present to be appointed a committee for the county. These gentlemen, without the general assent of the people, agreed to the proposal on condition they might be joined by several other gentlemen present who were named." The unexceptional character of the men named prevented any exception being taken to them. Thus the men first appointed, who seemed the prime movers but were not at all, took the lead and diverted the meeting from its original design. *New York Mercury*, December 2, 1765. The instructions which the meeting drew up expressed the belief that it could not be unreasonable, in these troublous times, for constituents, "in this constitutional way," to urge upon their representatives the need of watchfulness in the public interest, and proceeded to point out the dangerous tendency of the duties recently levied, etc. *New York Gazette*, November 28, 1765.

³The committee included William Livingston, William Smith, James DeLancey, and John Morin Scott. For the whole list, see *New York Gazette*, November 28, 1765. They were received kindly by the assembly, and were assured that the matter had already been taken into consideration. *Ibid.* About a month later the assembly passed resolutions embodying the instructions of the committee, but adding a profession of allegiance to the King. *Ibid.*, December 26. On the very day that the above instructions were presented to the assembly, November 26, a curious anonymous document was received by that body, which was also in the nature of instructions. It was not the resolutions which were originally prepared for the meeting of the 26th of November (for these, see *New York Mercury*, December 2, 1765), but was the work of some of the Sons of Liberty, or of individuals calling themselves such. The document was delivered to the clerk of the assembly in a sealed envelope, and when opened read as follows:—"Gentlemen of the House of Representatives you are to consider what is to be done first drawing of

After this rebuff the Sons of Liberty threw off the mask of secrecy, declared themselves the true representatives of the city and county, complained that they were not being supported by the best element of the people, and discussed the question as to whether the stamps in the state house should be burnt or sent back to England.¹ The first factional divisions of the Revolution were becoming clearly marked.

The result of the Stamp Act episode in detaching the propertied classes and especially the landed classes from the more radical followers of the Sons of Liberty, was thrown into strong relief by the elections of 1768 and 1769. In both of these elections the popular party of Livingston was defeated, and the royal or court party of De Lancey for the last time gained control of the assembly. It is true the moderate measures of resistance to the Stamp Act, which were also the most effective ones, had been carried through by the Livingston party in control of the assembly; but that party was at first hardly distinguishable from the mob element, and never perhaps became completely differentiated from it. It followed as a natural

as much money from the Lieutenant Governor's sellery as will Repare the fort and on spike the guns on the Battery & the nex a Repeal of the gunning act & then there will be a good Militia but not before and also as you are a setting you may consider of the Building act as it is to take place next yeare wich it Cannot for there is no supply of some sort of the materials Required this law is not ground on Reasons but there is a great many Reasons to the contrary so gentlemen we Desire you will do what Lays in your power for the good of the public but if you take this ill be not so conceited as to say or think that other people know nothing about government you have made these laws & say they are Right but they are Rong & take away Liberty, Oppressions of your make gentlemen make us SONS OF LIBERTY think you are not for the public Liberty, this is the general opinion of the people for this part of your conduct By order signed one and all, FREE-DOM." *Documentary History of New York*, III. 495 (ed. 1850-1851). The assembly voted the letter scandalous and offered a reward of £50 for the detection of the author. Dawson, *The Park and its Vicinity*, p. 15 note.

¹ "23rd. (Dec., 1765) Assembled a mob for householder's votes—yea or nay to burn the Stamps or send them to England back. Undetermined." *The Montresor Journals*, p. 343. "4th Feb., 1766. Meeting of the Libertines, who seem to decline, being much concerned that the gentlemen of property in the town dont publicly join them. They formed a Committee of Correspondence with the Liberty Boys of the neighboring Provinces." *Ibid.*, 348. For the further activity of the Sons of Liberty during this period, see *Memorial History of New York*, II. 374; *New York Gazette*, January, 2, 9, 17, 23, 30, and February 6, 1766; *New York Mercury*, February 17, 1766; Onderdonk, *Documents and Letters Intended to Illustrate the Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County*, pp. 13, 14. "Our political affairs are in great confusion. Today will be decided if the moble will command the town or will be subjected to the better sort of citizens. The latter are called by the Mayor and corporation to meet at 11 o'clock at the city hall to resolve upon the point. The Sons of Liberty, so as they stile themselves, pretend to take by arbitrary force the stamps out of the town house and send them to England. . . . The last resolves of the Assembly concerning the present circumstances are very well. Why have they not been so moderate long ago? The effect would have been favorable and their conduct honorable. We set the house afire and then endeavour to put it out." Peter Hasenclerler to William Johnson, New York, December 23, 1765. Johnson MSS., II. 279.

consequence that the party had to bear the discredit of the whole movement, the most clearly remembered features of which were mob violence and lawlessness. The assembly, thus placed in the hands of the reactionists, became more and more conservative and royalist in character. Its influence decreased steadily until it was replaced by the popularly established government known as the Provincial Congress.

The Townsend Act, which followed close upon the repeal of the Stamp Act, aroused much the same sort of opposition from the Sons of Liberty as the Stamp Act had done. Even the merchant class had not yet been entirely detached from the radical party. But they were nevertheless somewhat more cautious in their resistance, and acted to some extent by themselves. An agreement was drawn up and signed by nearly all of the merchants of New York, in which they pledged themselves not to import anything more from England until the duties were repealed. For those who broke the agreement boycott was to be the punishment. The enforcement of the agreement was placed in the hands of a general committee of one hundred.¹ Having determined upon this policy the merchants settled down to await the repeal. Meanwhile popular agitation and resistance, which were continued largely under the direction of the Sons of Liberty, were directed against the assembly in the proportion to which that body became reactionary and royalist. The Sons of Liberty exercised themselves dramatically in erecting liberty poles, quarrelling with the soldiers,² arousing opposition to the acts of the assembly, urging their views upon the city's representatives by means of instructions,³ and illustrating in many ways the

¹ *New York Mercury*, September 12, 1768.

² See *New York Colonial Documents*, VIII. 208; *Colden's Letter Book*, II. 211. Broad-sides entitled "To the Public," and, "To the Inhabitants of the City," in the New York Historical Society Library, volume one of the collection of broadsides. *New York Mercury*, February 5, 1770; Leake, *Life of Lamb*, p. 54, *et seq.*

³ The practice of drawing up instructions to representatives was a natural accompaniment of the coming political self-consciousness of the unfranchised classes. Almost inevitably the electors in a republican government look upon their representatives as mere agents of their own will; inevitably they will try to shape and control legislation by forcing this will upon their representatives. Instructions furnished the first method used by the popular element in America for controlling their representatives in this respect. The perfected nominating convention, with its platform, represents a later and perhaps a more efficient method. The practice of giving instructions was very common during the period under consideration. The "great majority of the freeholders of Queens and Suffolk counties" were pleased with the action of their representatives relative to the British acts of oppression, but directed them further to counteract the ruinous effect of the high fees of the supreme court, to continue the £5 act, and if possible raise the limit to £10. *New York Mercury*, April 17, 1769. Instructions to the same effect were sent in from many counties, and the object they had in view was ultimately attained. *Ibid.*, June 5, 1769. Another question that was agitated at this time was the proposed bill for substi-

influence of popular activity in political matters. The most prominent issue between the assembly and the Sons of Liberty at this period was raised by a bill proposing to appropriate money for the support of the British troops in the province. The episode presents perhaps as good an illustration as can be found of the popular political activity of the time, and shows therefore how the Revolutionary questions were teaching a minority the uses of popular organization. Mass meetings, committees, resolutions, instructions, were the crude ore out of which the nominating convention finally came a perfectly tempered instrument.

Soon after the bill proposing to aid the soldiers was brought forward, in December, 1769, a hand bill appeared, entitled "To the Public," and signed "Legion."¹ The sheet referred to the "late

tuting the ballot for viva voce voting. The Sons of Liberty had long desired such a change. They held a meeting at which they instructed the representatives of the city to support the measure. *New York Mercury*, Jan. 8, 1770. On the following day notice was given to "all such who are disposed to sign the petition to the Honorable House of Representatives praying it to pass a law to elect our representatives by ballot, that there will be petitions lodged at the houses of Messrs James M'Cartney in Bayard street, Henry Becker in the Broadway, David Philips in Horse and Cart street, and at Jasper Drakes between Beekman's and Burling's slip." (Broadside, Jan. 5, 1770, in the New York Historical Society Library, Vol. I. of the collection of broadsides.) But there was also strong opposition to the proposed change. On the 4th of January, the following notice was circulated on a broadside, entitled "TO THE INDEPENDENT FREEHOLDERS AND FREEMEN OF THIS CITY AND COUNTY. It having been industriously propagated that numbers of the voters of this city and county have been long intimidated at elections, and are therefore desirous of voting for the future in a secret manner by way of the ballot : which report being by many surmised to be void of a proper foundation, and only intended to answer the particular private purposes of certain persons : it is therefore requested that the independent Freeholders and Freemen . . . will meet at the Merchants Coffee House, tomorrow at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, to convey their sentiments respecting this matter to their representatives." (Broadside, Jan. 4, 1770. As above, Vol. I.) On January 5th a number of people assembled at the Coffee House, "when a gentleman at request of a number of his friends delivered himself in the following words : Gentlemen, I am desired to address you on the present very important occasion, and I beg your attention to what I am about to propose, in order to secure to us the exercise of one of our most invaluable privileges . . . And then the question was put in the following words : Gentlemen, do you approve of the old free constitutional mode of voting publicly and openly for the representatives you like? When a great number of the inhabitants signified by loud acclamation their entire approbation of the old mode." *New York Mercury*, Jan. 8, 1770. Instructions were prepared which dilated at length upon the danger of radical innovations, and closed with the following words : "Therefore we desire you . . . would endeavor to protect us in our . . . constitutional right of election, for we will not that the old custom of the land should be changed." *Ibid.* These instructions were signed by some 1700 names it is said, and were presented to the assembly by a committee which the meeting had appointed. The bill had already been defeated, but the representatives assured the committee that they would always give careful attention to "constitutional instructions from a majority of their constituents." *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1770. For instructions from the "inhabitants of Westchester county," see *New York Mercury*, Jan. 15, 1770.

¹ Broadside, no date, in the New York Historical Society Library, volume one of the collection. *Documentary History of New York*, III. 534, ed. 1850-1851.

base inglorious" action of the assembly in "opposition to the loud and general voice of their constituents," and called upon all inhabitants to convene at eleven o'clock on the morning of the 17th of December in the Fields, to pronounce upon this violation of the well known will of the people. On the 16th a still more radical tirade appeared, entitled "To the Betrayed Inhabitants of New York," and signed "A Son of Liberty." It also urged a meeting for drawing up instructions and appointing a committee.¹ On the appointed day some fourteen hundred people assembled in the Fields near Mr. Montagnie's coffee house. After waiting till twelve o'clock, "they appointed a gentleman (John Lamb) to propound the necessary questions. . . . He stated and explained the vote passed by the Assembly for granting the money to support the troops. After a small pause the question was put: Whether they approved of the vote of the . . . Assembly . . . which was carried in the negative, there being but very few in the affirmative, not more in our opinion than five or six. And then the question was put: Whether they were for giving any money to the troops under any consideration whatever? which was carried in the negative, there being not more in the affirmative than there were on the other question." A committee of ten was then appointed, which the assembly received "with decency, and in general returned for answer: That they were of the opinion that a majority of the inhab-

¹ Broadside, as above. *Documentary History of New York*, III. 528; Dawson, *The Park and its Vicinity*, p. 25. For the author of these articles rewards were offered of £50 and £100 respectively. *Documentary History of New York*, III. 532, 534; Dawson, *The Park and its Vicinity*, p. 25. From Parker, the editor of the *Gazette*, it was learned that the probable author was Alexander M'Dougall, who was consequently imprisoned for nearly three months. *Documentary History of New York*, III. 536. This arrest made McDougall the hero of the hour. He posed as the Wilkes of America, and was oppressed with visits of condolence; so much so that the following manifesto was put forth from the New Gaol on the 10th of February, 1770: "Many of my friends, who, having honored me with their visits since my oppressive confinement in this place, have advised me, as I intend to devote a good deal of my time to do justice to the public, in the cause for which I am imprisoned, to appoint an hour from which it will be most convenient for me to see my friends: I do therefore hereby notify them that I shall be glad of the honor of their company from three o'clock in the afternoon till six." Dawson, *The Park and its Vicinity*, p. 32. From time to time he issued addresses to the freeholders from the New Gaol. See Broadside, December 22, 1770, and January 26, 1771, in the New York Historical Society Library, Vol. I. of the collection. For further information on this affair, see Thomas, *History of Printing*, II. 260-262; *New York Colonial Documents*, VIII. 208; *Colden's Letter Book*, II. 211. Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, p. 60. The letter entitled "To the Betrayed Inhabitants of New York" was answered by "A Citizen," in another broadside dated December 18, 1769. Five days later this was in turn answered by "Plebeian," who pointed out that the assembly could not plead ignorance of the will of the people. Even before the meeting in the Fields they might have had full instructions, for "they must know how ready the people are to come together to consult on matters that respect their liberties and property." Broadside as cited.

itants were disposed to give money to support the troops, and that it was now too late to pay any regard to the above report of the committee."¹

This may serve to illustrate the attitude and the methods of the Sons of Liberty, during the period from the levying of the new duties until 1770, when all but the duties on tea were repealed. The Stamp Act episode had detached the landed classes generally, if one may make a rough generalization, but there was yet no sharp separation of the merchants from the mechanics and artisans—the "Inhabitants"—who filled up the ranks of the Sons of Liberty. Two forces were now operating however to separate the merchants from the mechanics and artisans. In the first place, the merchants, who were mostly men of property, were becoming conscious, as the landed classes had already become, of the consequences of the "mobish violence" which was constantly disturbing the peace of the city; and like the landed classes they resented the growing interference of an unfranchised class in political matters. More important however was the fact that, as the years passed and the duties were unrepealed, the commercial interests of the city began to suffer on account of the sweeping character of the non-importation agreement. The merchants began to consider therefore whether it were not possible to dispense with the liberty in return for a little trade—whether it were not quite as well to be a "Son of Liberty and Trade," as to be a mere "Son of Liberty." Early in 1770 this feeling became strong enough to reform the non-importation agreement on a more conservative basis; the same movement split the old organization into two—the Sons of Liberty and the Sons of Liberty and Trade.

The division came when the Rhode Island merchants first broke away from the old non-importation agreement. Upon learning of this violation, the committee of vigilance called a meeting of the inhabitants, by public notice, to meet on the 5th of June.² A "considerable number of inhabitants" assembled on that day; and to them was twice read a series of resolutions, previously prepared by the committee, condemning the Rhode Island merchants, declaring them enemies of the country, proposing to boycott them, and renewing the adherence of the New York merchants to the non-importation agreement. The assembled inhabitants assented to these resolutions, it is said, by a great majority.³ Meanwhile the con-

¹ *New York Mercury*, December 25, 1769.

² General direction of the affairs of the non-importation league in New York was in the hands of a committee of one hundred. A subcommittee of vigilance acted for it in an administrative or executive capacity. The call for the meeting was posted May 30th. *New York Mercury*, June 11, 1770; Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, p. 67.

³ For these resolutions see *ibid.*

servative had been carrying through a plan of their own. A number of merchants had already asked the general committee of one hundred to "take the sense" of the city, "by subscription," whether "an alteration should not be made in our non-importation agreement." A meeting was held and persons were appointed to go through the wards proposing to each of the inhabitants the following question: "Do you approve of a general importation of goods from Great Britain except teas and other articles which are or may be subject to an importation duty? Or do you approve of our non-importation agreement continuing in the manner it now is?"¹ A majority was found to be in favor of importation according to the proposed change.² Somewhat to the surprise, and much to the chagrin, of the committee of vigilance, which seems to have been composed of the radical element, both the meeting and the resolutions of the 5th of June were therefore disavowed by the general committee of one hundred, a majority of which were in sympathy with the views of the conservatives. From this time the division was complete.³

¹ *New York Mercury*, June 18, 1770; Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, p. 67.

² *Ibid.* According to Colden 1,180 persons, among them the principal inhabitants, declared for importation, "about 300 were neutral or unwilling to declare their sentiments and few of any distinction declared in opposition to it." *Letter Book*, II. 223.

³ The separation had of course been long in coming. The actual struggle over non-importation was introduced by a curious and amusing prologue earlier in the year. It had been customary for the Sons of Liberty and others to celebrate, annually on the 18th of March, the repeal of the Stamp Act. At first this celebration was held at Bardin's Tavern. *New York Mercury*, March 9, 1767. As early as 1769 the friends of the repeal had divided into two factions, one holding its celebration at Bardin's as usual, the other at Van DeWater's. The former party Holt, editor of the *Journal*, characterized as "the genuine Sons of Liberty," composed mostly of merchants; the latter were "probably mechanics." *Memorial History of New York*, II. 397. At the next celebration the division was complete. The radical faction posted a notice calling a meeting of the Sons of Liberty at Montagnie's (Bardin's establishment had meanwhile been taken by Montagnie) as usual. Whereupon Mr. Montagnie published the following notice in the *Journal*: "To The Public: An advertisement having appeared in last Monday's papers inviting the Sons of Liberty to dine at my house on Monday, the 19th of March next. . . not having proceeded from any of the gentlemen who engaged my house for that day, I think myself obliged to give this notice that several gentlemen, as a committee from a great number of other gentlemen, having engaged my house some time ago for the 19th of March next, I shall not be able to entertain any other company." *New York Journal*, Feb. 8, 1770; Dawson, *The Park, etc.*, p. 42. A few days later the following appeared from the committee mentioned by Montagnie: "The friends of Liberty and Trade, who formerly associated together at Bardin's . . . to celebrate the . . . repeal of the stamp act, are requested to meet for that purpose on Monday, the 19th of March next, at the house of Mr. Abraham De La Montagnie." Dawson, *The Park, etc.*, p. 43. Finally, on the 15th, the other faction announced: "To all the Sons of Liberty," that whereas the house of Mr. Montagnie could not be secured, "a number of Sons of Liberty" had secured "the corner house in the Broadway, near Liberty Pole, lately kept by Mr. Edward Smith." *Ibid.* This house was purchased for the permanent use of the Sons of Liberty. It stood at the corner of Broadway and "the Bourie Road," and was christened Hampden Hall. Leake,

The general merchant body was now detached from the Sons of Liberty proper ; henceforth it favored non-importation only as respects articles actually taxed ; and its influence was exerted in support of conservative measures and in opposition to mob violence and all hasty and ill-considered action. For a time therefore the Sons of Liberty remained under a cloud, especially during the years of 1771 and 1772, which, partly because of the repeal of all duties except those on tea, were a period of quiet and unsuited to the turbulent activity which had brought them into prominence in previous years.¹ But their opportunity came again within the next two years when the East India Company attempted to force the importation of tea into the colonies. The Sons of Liberty renewed not only their spirit but also their organization ; and from this time dates the struggle between the radicals and the conservatives to direct the Revolutionary policy of New York by controlling this organization. It is necessary to notice therefore : (1) What was the new attitude of the British government which presented the question directly at issue ; (2) the renewed organization of the Sons of Liberty which claimed to represent the city ; (3) the result of the tea episode upon the attitude of the conservatives.

The Stamp Act had been repealed in the spring of 1766. On the 20th of November, 1767, an import tax had been laid upon tea, glass, painter's colors, and paper. All of these duties were in turn repealed in 1770, with the exception of those on tea, which were retained as a test "of the parliamentary right to tax." But it was difficult to make any test so long as the American merchants refused to import any of the tea. Meanwhile the affairs of the East India Company were in a deplorable state, the result, it was thought, of the loss of the American market which had been regularly supplied by illegal traffic with Holland. Partly to test the right of taxation, partly to relieve the East India Company, a scheme was proposed by which the Americans could get their tea from England with the duty, cheaper than from Holland without it. This was effected by giving the company a drawback, on the tea exported to America, of all duties paid on such tea when entering England from the east. With this advantage the company was enabled to offer tea to America at a price which, even with the slight duty, was less

Life and Times of General Lamb, p. 62. From this time on the parties celebrated separately. See *New York Mercury*, March 4, 1771 ; *Memorial History of New York*, II. 419.

¹ "It gives me particular satisfaction to find this party [non-importation] entirely defeated last week in a violent struggle to turn out such of the elective magistrates of the city as had distinguished themselves in any way in favor of government." Colden to Hillsborough, October 15, 1770. *Letter Book*, II. 229. See *Ibid.* 222, 223.

than the price which must be paid for it in Holland. But the company was given to understand that the Americans would not be influenced by any mere appeal to their pecuniary interests, and that an attempt to land any dutied tea in America would be attended with disastrous results. The directors were nevertheless assured by Lord North that the King would have it so; he was determined to "try the question with America." Four ships were consequently sent to the four ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, in the fall of 1773, and agents appointed by letter to receive the cargos in each port.¹ The expected arrival of Captain Lockyear at the port of New York furnished the occasion for a reorganization of the Sons of Liberty.

On Thursday, the 16th of December, 1773, some of the Sons of Liberty, who still acted as a committee of the society, though the organization had fallen away somewhat during the quiet years since 1770, issued a broadside calling a meeting for the following day at the city hall. Besides the members, "every other friend to the liberties and trade of America," was invited to be present.² In spite of bad weather, "a very numerous and respectable number of citizens met at the City Hall" on the following day. Mr. John Lamb, of the committee, addressed the meeting on the questions at issue, and read several letters which had been received from the Boston and Philadelphia committees of correspondence relative to the "importation of the East India's tea." A committee of fifteen was then chosen to answer these letters and "to correspond with the sister colonies on the subject of the dutied tea." A series of resolutions, bearing the date November 29th,³ entitled "The Association of the Sons of Liberty of New York," was then read. The preamble of these resolutions related briefly the history of the import duty on tea, the failure to secure American importers, and the

¹ Broadside dated November 29, and December 17, 1773, in the New York Historical Society Library, Vol. I. of the collection. *Rivington's Gazetteer*, November 18, and December 2, 1773; Fiske, *American Revolution*, I. 82, 83.

² "The members of the association of the Sons of Liberty are requested to meet at the City Hall at one o'clock tomorrow (being Friday) on business of the utmost importance, and every other friend to the liberties and trade of America are hereby most cordially invited to meet at the same time and place.

The Committee of the Association.

Thursday, 16th December, 1773."

Broadside, December 16, 1773, in the New York Historical Society Library, Vol. I. of the collection.

³ These resolutions bearing date of November 29th were drawn up and adopted at a meeting of that date. Broadside, November 29, 1773, as above cited. The later meeting of the 17th of December was probably held for the purpose of securing a more general support of the resolutions. At any rate the latter meeting may be said to mark the complete reorganization of the Sons of Liberty.

recent acts of Parliament favorable to the East India Company, finally closing with the assurance that the tea ships might be daily expected. "Therefore," the document continues, "to prevent slavery . . . we the subscribers, being influenced from a regard to liberty and disposed to . . . transmit to our posterity those blessings of freedom which our ancestors have handed down to us, and to contribute to the support of the common liberties of America which are in danger to be subverted: Do, for those important purposes, agree to associate together under the name and stile of the SONS OF LIBERTY OF NEW YORK, and engage our honor to and with each other faithfully to observe and perform the following resolutions." The five resolutions which follow the preamble recite that the subscribers bind themselves to consider as an enemy of the liberties of America any and every person who aids or abets the introduction or the landing of the dutied tea, or buys or sells it, or aids or abets the purchase or sale of it; whether the duty was paid in England or America was immaterial; as for him who transgressed these rules "we will not deal with or employ or have any connection with him." The resolutions having been read, "Mr. Lamb then putting the question whether they agreed to these resolutions? it passed in the affirmative *nem. con.*" At this point the mayor and recorder came in with a message from the governor. Permission having been received to deliver it, the mayor stated that the governor wished to make the following proposal to the people, viz: that the tea should upon arrival be put into the fort at noon day, that it should remain there until the council or the King or the proprietors should order it delivered, that it should then be delivered at noonday. "Gentlemen," said the mayor, "is this satisfactory to you?" For all answer he got only "no" repeated three times. Mr. Lamb in his turn, having made some pertinent remarks, put the following question: "Is it then your opinion gentlemen that the tea should be landed under these circumstances?" So general was the negative reply that there was no call for a division. The meeting then adjourned till the arrival of the tea ships. The association, together with an account of the meeting, was ordered printed and transmitted to the committees of the other colonies.¹

Such were the Sons of Liberty newly organized. They claimed to represent the city, and through their committee to express its will. When the tea ships arrived on the 18th of April, 1774, the

¹ An account of the proceedings of the meeting, including the advertisement by which it was called and the resolutions of association in full, was published by John Holt. This document is in the New York Historical Society Library. Vol. I. of the collection of broadsides. See also, Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, pp. 79, 80.

city was informed by the committee's hand bills, and from day to day other announcements of a similar character furnished information as to what had been and what would be done.¹ It is likely that the claim of representing the city was not altogether unjustified in this particular case, for the attempt to force importation upon the colony was certainly not popular with any class. The merchants themselves, as we have seen, had never given up the principle that dutied goods should not be imported, and they were quite willing to resist any effort to force such articles into the province. Even the extreme conservatives were willing to record their protest, and the assembly took action for the last time by appointing a committee of its own, "to obtain the most early and authentic intelligence of all such acts and resolutions of the British Parliament . . . as do or may relate or affect the liberties and privileges of his Majesty's subjects in America, and to keep up . . . a correspondence . . . with our sister colonies."² Thus all parties were practically at one in respect to the importation of the dutied tea; the conservatives, in so far as they refused to act with the Sons of Liberty, were actuated rather by jealousy of the growing political influence of the unfranchised classes, and by fear of their undisciplined methods of resistance, than by difference of opinion as to the nature of the British policy itself.³ And this fear was not altogether unfounded as the sequel proved. The radical methods which the Sons of

¹ "TO THE PUBLIC:—The long expected tea ships arrived last night at Sandy Hook, but the pilot would not bring up the Captain until the sense of the city was known. The committee were immediately informed that the Captain solicits for liberty to come up to provide necessaries for his return, the ship to remain at Sandy Hook. The committee conceiving that he should have such liberty signified it to the gentleman who is to supply him and others with necessaries. Advise of this was immediately dispatched to the Captain, and whenever he comes up care will be taken that he does not enter the customs house and that no time be lost in dispatching him. New York, April 19, 1774." Broadside, as above cited. "TO THE PUBLIC: The sense of the city relative to the landing of the East India Company's tea being signified to Captain Lockyear by the committee, nevertheless it is the desire of a number of the citizens that, at his departure from hence, he should see, with his own eyes, their detestation of the measures pursued by the ministry to enslave the country. This will be declared by the convention of the people at his departure . . . which will be on next Saturday morning about 9 o'clock, where no doubt every friend of this country will attend. The bills will give the notice about an hour before he embarks from Murry's wharf. By Order of the Committee." (Dated April 21, 1774.) Broadside, as above cited.

² *Assembly Journal*, January 20, 1774; *Rivington's Gazetteer*, January 27, 1774. The committee consisted of John Cruger, James DeLancey, Jacob Walton, Benjamin Seaman, Isaac Wilkins, Frederick Philipse, Daniel Kissam, Zebulon Seaman, John Rapalja, Simon Boerum, John DeNoyelles, and George Clinton, "or any seven of them." See also Dawson, *History of Westchester County During the American Revolution*, p. 23.

³ A few voices were raised favoring the importation of the company's tea, on the ground of commercial necessity. See a series of articles by Popliocola in the Broadside, as above cited. See also *Rivington's Gazetteer*, November 18, and December 2, 1773.

Liberty were likely to favor, had already been foreshadowed in the attitude of the meeting of the seventeenth of December, with reference to the proposals of the governor. The action of the citizens of Boston in throwing the tea into the harbor had meanwhile fired the zeal of the New York radicals, and the "Mohawks," a kind of rough riding detachment of the regular army of the Sons of Liberty, were prepared for similar measures if occasion offered. Eventually, in spite of the somewhat conservative attitude of the new committee, a part of Captain Lockyear's cargo was dumped into the harbor, while the band, a little incongruously perhaps, played "God Save the King."¹

Once more therefore the Sons of Liberty, the representatives of the unfranchised classes, had scored a victory over the propertied enfranchised classes. The event served to separate the factions the more sharply and to introduce the coming struggle for control, because the difference was seen to be largely a question of methods of resistance rather than a question of resistance itself. As this fact became more and more obvious, the extreme conservatives were dropping out of the contest entirely, eventually to swell the numbers of the Tory party. Within a few months the passage of the coercion acts precipitated the permanent Revolutionary contest, and the question became, at least within the city, less and less one of resistance or non-resistance and almost entirely one of the methods and character of the resistance. Was the policy of New York in this struggle to be dominated and guided by the radical unfranchised classes, whose methods were characterized by rashness and mob violence, or was it to be under the direction of moderate men of property, who were accustomed to exercise political privileges, whose methods were those of reason and good sense, and who would firmly assert the rights of the colony without over-stepping the bounds which separated law from lawlessness? The conservatives now saw clearly that a policy of mere negation, a policy of holding aloof, would not in any sense suffice; action of a positive character was necessary. Yet they shrewdly refrained from opposing the organization, now in the hands of the Sons of Liberty, which claimed to represent the city. They were conscious that this organization, whether legal or extra-legal, was grounded in a wide popular support, that it was the essential political institution of the hour, and that through it or not at all they must give practical effect to their ideas. Their energies were now directed therefore to obtaining control of this organization, through which they hoped to

¹ Leake, *Life and Times of General Lamb*, pp. 76, 77, 82, 83.

guide and direct the popular will. They captured the organization at the election of the new committee of fifty-one. A protracted struggle then followed over the election of delegates to the first Continental Congress ; incidentally the first attempt was made by the city committee to organize the rural districts for the Revolutionary contest.

CARL BECKER.